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# BULLETIN OF THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART

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## COLLECTION OF WOOD-WORK AND FURNITURE

VARIOUS specimens of carved wood recently purchased by the Museum, together with important gifts from Mr. J. Pierpont Morgan, and ranging from fifteenth century Gothic through the Renaissance to the period of Louis XVI in France, have been arranged in Gallery 4 on the first floor, and the room is now open to the public.

The Bulletin has noted and described these acquisitions from time to time, and in some instances has illustrated them. Dynamiting for the foundation of the new wing of the Museum necessitated boarding up the windows of Gallery 4, and delayed the exhibition of the collection until this month.

The examples have been divided into four groups, Gothic, Renaissance, German Renaissance and French eighteenth century. Visitors will be impressed with the many beautiful pieces, and, generally speaking, with the very interesting exhibit as a whole. Against the west wall is shown the fifteenth century Gothic group. There are several credences, or buffets and ten chest fronts, among which will be found fine examples of both early and decorated tracery, the linen-fold pattern, as it is called, and two unusual specimens of the transition period between Gothic and Renaissance. An interesting reredos (the carved screen for the back of an altar), showing Italian influences, and a Pietà (the image of the Virgin with the dead Christ), nearly life-size, both painted, are hung above two of the credences. A double choir-stall with hinged seats, and some ten statues arranged on pedestals and brackets, complete the Gothic group. The statues are especially worthy

of mention in their beauty and interest and their excellent state of preservation.

The east wall has been used for the Renaissance pieces, which are principally French and of the sixteenth century. Of three cabinets the central one is late in the century, crowned with a pediment, and enriched with small marble panels. The four doors are carved with graceful female figures bearing musical instruments. The other two cabinets, also French, are interesting examples of the third period of the Renaissance, 1547-1560. With the cabinets stand chests of the same period, and above them on the wall are hung various panels ranging from early in the century, when the Gothic tradition was still felt, to the final florescence of the Renaissance. Two interesting Italian marriage coffers, one in *gesso* work, a composition decoration, both painted and gilt, are placed in proximity, while against the south side of the room, and continuing the Renaissance group, stand two great German cabinets dating from the middle of the seventeenth century. These cabinets are good examples of the period in Germany, and show in their large size and prevailing architectural construction, being faced with pillars, pilasters, cornices and pediments, the feeling of revolt from Gothic influence and style. A great cabinet much like these was given in 1556 to the Church of St. Mary Overie by Hugh Offley, then Lord Mayor of London.

Against the north wall the small panels and examples of the Louis XIV-Louis XVI period have been hung, with two large panels, one of which still retains its original colors and gilding. With this group, and in order to obtain the proper light for the delicate carving, two screens

have been used for the eight pilaster fronts given by Mr. Morgan, and three large Louis XIV panels formerly in the Bibliothèque Royale. The pilaster fronts, among the most perfect and exquisite examples of wood carving in existence, are

thèque Nationale are worthy pendants to the foregoing. They, too, were originally painted and gilt, and have also been perfectly restored to their first condition, disclosing the full modeling and crispness of the carving. Of a more severe and magnifi-



JOHN RUSKIN, BY GUTZON BORGLUM

sculptured from designs by Salembier, a notable designer and engraver in the time of Louis XVI. He excelled in "sculptures in the flat," and these panels bear witness to his elegance of style, being carved with foliage, vases of flowers, torches, caryatides, cups, birds, fowls, grotesques and monograms, executed with masterly skill and beauty. The panels were originally painted and gilt. They have been carefully and very successfully cleaned, and one may now study them as they left the hands of the carver. Originally in the Lelong Collection, Paris, they were purchased at the sale of that collection in 1903.

The three large panels from the Biblio-

cent period than the pilaster fronts, they exhibit in an extraordinary degree the extent to which artists bent their efforts in the adornment of palaces under Louis XIV. Carved in French oak of a close grain, as are the eight smaller panels, it has been possible to preserve these valuable examples almost intact to the present day.

Above the carvings the walls have been hung with tapestries, adding a note of color to the room, and forming an excellent background. The collection repays earnest study, and the various pieces on exhibition cannot fail to arouse interest in the mind of the lover of things beautiful as well as the artist and craftsman.

C. H.